

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8829

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3249

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ES; SHUM; PINT; PGOV

REF: SAN SALVADOR 3217 AND PREVIOUS

USCINCSO PASS POLAD

1. REFTEL DESCRIBED PRESIDENT MOLINA AND DEFENSE MINISTER'S PRESENTATION TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS OF THE GOES' OFFICIAL EXPLANATION OF ITS ACTIONS IN THE FACE OF STUDENT MANIFESTATIONS AND PROVOCATIONS. WE HAVE NOW BEEN TOLD, BY ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS, THAT PRIOR THE MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADORS THE SAME SPEAKERS PRESENTED ESSENTIALLY THE SAME STORY TO AN AUDIENCE COMPOSED OF THE CABINET, SUB-SECRETARIES, AND THE GOVERNMENT PARTY (PCN) LEGISLATORS. THE FORMAT WAS IDENTICAL, WITH A BRIEFING FOLLOWED BY QUESTIONS.

2. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, THE AUDIENCE, AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, WAS GENERALLY IMPRESSED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S PRESENTATION. THERE WERE HOWEVER EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN, VOICED BY SOME
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PARTICIPANTS, FOR THE OVERALL IMPRESSION THAT THE EVENTS OF JULY

30 AND THEIR AFTERMATH MIGHT CREATE, BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND ABROAD. QUERIED AS TO WHO HAD EXPRESSED SUCH CONCERN, THE SOURCE IDENTIFIED FOREIGN MINISTER BORGONOVO AND ALBERTO ZUNIGA, SUB-SECRETARY OF EDUCATION FOR CULTURE AND SPORTS AS TWO OF THEM.

ONE PART OF THE MINORITY VIEW, WHILE NOT FORMALLY VOICED DURING THE SESSION BUT EVIDENT FROM SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN SOME OF THE AUDIENCE, WAS THAT THE PRESIDENT AND HIS ADVISORS DID NOT HAVE A COMPLETE OR ACCURATE IMPRESSION OF WHAT THE GENERAL POPULACE THOUGHT OF THE INCIDENT. THE SOURCE SAID THAT MANY SECTORS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENT REGIME, SIMPLY DO NOT ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT'S VERSION OF WHAT TOOK PLACE AND WHY, SPECIFICALLY, THE NUMBERS OF CASUALTIES AND THE NEED FOR SUCH HARSHNESS GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE THREAT. HE SAID THERE WAS ALSO CONSIDERABLE SCEPTICISM EXPRESSED OVER THE "INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY THEORY" ANNOUNCED BY THE PRESIDENT. THIS WAS CHARACTERIZED AS MUCH TOO SIMPLISTIC AN EXPLANATION FOR AN EXCEEDINGLY COMPLEX SITUATION.

3 THE SOURCE THEN EXPRESSED HIS OWN CONCERN THAT THE PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE OF POLITICAL ADVISORS IS NARROW AND CONFINED, FOR THE HBST PART, TO MILITARY OFFICERS. AFTER EXPRESSING HIS AMAZEMENT AT THE NON-SOPHISTICATION OF THE QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS POSITED BY THE PCN LEGISLATORS ATTENDING, HE SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PRINCIPAL CIVILIAN POLITICAL ADVISOR IS PCN ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT RUBEN ALFONSO "CHELE" RODRIGUEZ. HE SAID THAT SOME OF THE MORE ENLIGHTENED CABINET MEMBERS, SUCH AS BORGONOVO, ARE TRYING TO EXPAND THE PRESIDENT'S AWARENESS OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF SUCH EVENTS. HE EXPRESSED HIS WORRY THAT THE PRESIDENT AND HIS ADVISORS HAVE WORKED THEMSELVES INTO A SITUATION WHERE THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS STUDENTS AND FACULTY ARE VIEWED AS THE ENEMY. AGAIN, AN OVER-SIMPLIFICATION WITH POSSIBLY DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES. HE SAID HE AND OTHERS WOULD PREFER THAT THE GOVERNMENT VIEW THE UNIVERSITY AS A RESOURCE, ONE WITH WHICH THE GOVERNMENT MUST WORK TO BRING ITS STUDENTS AROUND TO A SENSE OF CONTRIBUTING TO, AND COOPERATING WITH, THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

4. COMMENT - EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE HEARD SIMILAR EXPRESSIONS OF SCEPTICISM AND CONCERN ABOUT THE OFFICIAL STORY, NOT ONLY, CONFIDENTIAL

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AS WOULD BE EXPECTED FROM AMONG THE OPPOSTION, BUT ALSO FROM MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY OFFICER CORPS. PERHAPS AWARE OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS, THE PRESIDENT AND MOD HAD PLANNED TO CARRY THEIR STORY TO THE BARRACKS ON AUGUST 13. THEY DID NOT DO SO, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY BECAUSE THEY WERE ENGAGED IN STRATEGY TALKS TO DETERMINE THEIR RESPONSE TO STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS PLANNED FOR AUGUST 14.

MOSKOWITZ

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